

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COPENH 01687 102130Z
ACTION EUR-12

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USEEC

E.O.: 11652: N/A
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SUBJ: DANISH MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS: SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, LIBERALS
AND CONSERVATIVES AND THE "WINNERS"

1. SUMMARY. THE DANES WENT TO THE POLLS ON MARCH 7 TO CAST THEIR VOTES IN LOCAL ELECTIONS. ALTHOUGH THERE IS STILL SOME UNCERTAINTY OVER THE FINAL PERCENTAGE FIGURES, IT APPEARS THAT THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, WITH ABOUT 38 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL, THE LIBERALS (17 PERCENT) AND THE CONSERVATIVES (14 PERCENT) WERE THE TOP THREE PARTIES AND THEREFORE QUALIFIED AS "WINNERS". END SUMMARY.

2. ISSUES WERE NOT CLEARLY DRAWN, AND IT IS DIFFICULT TO JUDGE JUST HOW MANY VOTERS WERE SWAYED BY THE QUALIFICATIONS OF INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATES AND HOW MANY VOTED FOR A PARTY. IN COPENHAGEN, PARTY LOYALTY UNDOUBTEDLY COUNTED. MANY OF THE INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATES
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PAGE 02 COPENH 01687 102130Z

WERE NOT WELL KNOWN TO THE VOTERS, AND THE COPENHAGEN BALLOT, WHICH WAS ONE METER LONG AND HALF A METER WIDE, WAS CLOGGED WITH PARTY LISTS, INCLUDING THOSE ADVANCED BY THE VEGETARIANS, ENVIRONMENTALISTS, AND HOMOSEXUALS.

3. AN ANALYSIS OF THE VOTES CAST IN THESE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WITH THOSE CAST IN LAST YEAR'S PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION YIELDS A

CONFUSED PICTURE OF DANISH POLITICAL TRENDS. THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS HAVE CLEARLY MOVED AHEAD AS HAVE THE CONSERVATIVES. HOWEVER THE OTHER PARTIES OF THE CENTER-RIGHT (RADICALS, CENTER DEMOCRATS AND CHRISTIANS) FARED LESS WELL. THE PRESS HAS ALSO CHARACTERIZED LIBERAL MUNICIPAL ELECTION PERFORMANCE AS A SETBACK. THIS IS DIFFICULT TO CREDIT SINCE ALTHOUGH THE LIBERALS DROPPED ONE PERCENT (18 PERCENT TO 17 PERCENT) FROM THE 1974 MUNICIPAL RACE, THEY DID SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER THAN THEIR 12 PERCENT SHOWING IN 1977. MOGENS GLISTRUP'S PROGRESSIVES REGISTERED A 5 PERCENT LOSS AS COMPARED WITH 1977 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, BUT PRESS COMMENTATORS DO NOT ASCRIBE THIS SETBACK TO GLISTRUP'S RECENT CONVICTION FOR TAX FRAUD.

4. ON THE LEFT, BOTH THE COMMUNISTS AND THE SOCIALIST PEOPLES PARTY (SF) LOST VOTES IN COPENHAGEN, RETAINED OR INCREASED SLIGHTLY THEIR SHARE ELSEWHERE IN THE COUNTRY AND CAME OUT JUST ABOUT WHERE THEY STARTED: EACH GOT 3-4 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL. THE LEFT SOCIALISTS (VS) REGISTERED A SLIGHT LOSS WHEN COMPARED WITH THE 1977 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, BUT DOUBLED THEIR SHOWING IN THE 1974 MUNICIPAL RACE (FROM 1 TO 2 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL).

5. IN A RADIO COMMENTARY MARCH 8, PRIME MINISTER ANKER JORGENSEN EXPRESSED DELIGHT AT THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ADVANCE, VIEWING IT AS AN INDICATION THAT THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN DENMARK HAD ONCE AGAIN "STABILIZED". JORGENSEN REBUTTED SPECULATION THAT HE MIGHT WISH TO CASH IN ON HIS PARTY'S SUCCESS BY CALLING NATIONAL ELECTIONS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 COPENH 01687 102130Z

TIONS NOW AND ADDED THAT HE HOPED THAT IT WOULD BE A "GOOD LONG TIME" BEFORE THEY WERE CALLED. (NATIONAL ELECTIONS ARE CONSTITUTIONALLY REQUIRED EVERY FOUR YEARS.)

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT CONTINUE TO PLAGUE THE GOVERNMENT, THE RULING SOCIAL DEMOCRATS SEEM TO HAVE CONVINCED AN INCREASING NUMBER OF DANISH VOTERS THAT THE COURSE SET BY THE PARTY IS THE BEST HOPE FOR THE COUNTRY. THE RELATIVELY STRONG SHOWING BY THE CONSERVATIVES, AT THE EXPENSE OF MOST OF THE OTHER CENTER RIGHT PARTIES, IS UNDERSTANDABLE. CONSERVATIVE LEADER POUL SCHLUTER HAS SUCCEEDED IN MENDING THE SPLIT THAT AFFLICTED HIS PARTY FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS AND TODAY STANDS AS THE MOST ATTRACTIVE AND ARTICULATE NON-SOCIALIST LEADER.
DEAN

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